

White House Conference on Aging: AOA Solutions Forum

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Health and Long-term Living

Problem: Many individuals who are residents of nursing homes and long-term care facilities have inadequate vision care as a result of ineffective regulations controlling delivery of vision care in this health care facility environment.

Solutions: Reasonable modifications to present laws include:

1. Amending applicable federal law to mandate that comprehensive eye examinations be given to all nursing home patients upon admission and periodically thereafter. Visual screening is intended by present law to be an integral component of the admission physical assessment process for all nursing home residents, and it is to be repeated periodically. But visual screening processes are less valid and reliable when compared to a comprehensive eye examination – and more often than not omitted entirely from the admissions physical exam.
2. Specifying a failed visual screening as a trigger component of the Resident Assessment Instrument Visual Function RAP Module of the Minimum Data Set.
3. Specifying the provision of medical vision care services by licensed eye care specialists as a necessary component of minimum quality of care standards for all nursing facilities in Social Security Law and Public Health Law.
4. Specifying the non-provision of necessary vision corrective devices as a form of prohibited physical restraint, and require a physician order from a licensed eye physician to discontinue use of necessary vision corrective devices.
5. Specifying the requirement of lensometry and photography of all vision correcting devices in use by a resident upon admission, and that collected data be maintained as part of resident medical records to prevent loss and ease replacement of vision correcting devices.
6. Enforcing laws requiring accuracy of resident assessment (MDS) data. Establish quality control standards to assure MDS information is not being produced without supporting medical testing.